

THE STRANGER AND HIS FRIEND.

BY JAMES MONTGOMERY.

COMPOSED FOR A LADIES' BAZAAR.

*"I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me
" drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in : naked, and ye clothed me :
" I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me."
" In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren,
" ye have done it unto me."—Matt. xxv. 35, 36, 40.*

A poor wayfaring man of grief
Hath often cross'd me on my way,
Who sued so humbly for relief
That I could never answer *Nay* :
I had not power to ask his name,
Whither he went or whence he came,
Yet there was something in his eye
That won my love, I knew not why.

Once, when my scanty meal was spread,
He euter'd ; not a word he spake ;
Just perishing for want of bread ;
I gave him all : he bless'd it, brake,
And ate, but gave me part again ;
Mine was an angel's portion then,
For while I fed with eager haste,
The crust was manna to my taste.

I spied him where a fountain burst
Clear from the rock ;—his strength was gone ;
The heedless water mock'd his thirst,
He heard it, saw it, hurrying on ;
I ran and raised the sufferer up,
'Thrice from the stream he drain'd my cup,
Dipt, and return'd it running o'er ;
I drank, and never thirsted more.

'Twas night, the floods were out, it blew
A winter-hurricane aloof ;
I heard his voice abroad, and flew
To bid him welcome to my roof :
I warm'd, I cloth'd, I cheer'd my guest,
Laid him on my own couch to rest,
Then made the hearth my bed, and seem'd
In Eden's garden while I dream'd.

Stript, wounded, beaten, nigh to death,
I found him by the highway side ;
I roused his pulse, brought back his breath,
Reviv'd his spirit, and supplied
Wine, oil, refreshment ;—he was heal'd :
—I had, myself, a wound conceal'd,
But from that hour forgot the smart,
And peace bound up my broken heart.

In prison I saw him next,—condemn'd
'To meet a Traitor's doom at morn :
The tide of lying tongues I stemm'd,
And honour'd him midst shame and scorn :
My friendship's utmost zeal to try,
He ask'd—if I for him would die :
The Flesh was weak, my blood ran chill,
But the free Spirit cried—"I will."

Then in a moment, to my view,
The stranger darted from disguise ;
The tokens in his hands I knew ;
My Saviour stood before mine eyes :
He spake,—and my poor name he nam'd,—
" Of me thou hast not been ashamed ;
" These deeds shall thy memorial be ;
" Fear not—thou didst them unto me."



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